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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Programme of work for 2007

I. Mandate of the Committee

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for 2007 is contained in General Assembly resolutions 61/22, 61/23 and 61/24 of 1 December 2006.

2. In its resolution 61/22, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", the General Assembly expressed its appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the Assembly and took note of its annual report,[1] including the conclusions and valuable recommendations contained in chapter VII thereof, requested it to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to support the Middle East peace process and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people and authorized it to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-second session and thereafter. It also requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly, the Security Council or the Secretary-General, as appropriate. It requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations in order to mobilize international solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people, in particular during this critical period of humanitarian hardship, with the overall aim of promoting the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, and to continue to involve additional civil society organizations in its work. The Assembly requested the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it, at its request, the relevant information and documentation which they have at their disposal. The Assembly also requested

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/61/35).

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the Secretary-General to circulate the report of the Committee to all competent bodies of the United Nations and urged them to take the necessary action, as appropriate.

3. In its resolution 61/23, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continue to carry out its programme of work as detailed in the relevant earlier resolutions, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance, including, in particular, the organization of international meetings and conferences in various regions with the participation of all sectors of the international community, liaison and cooperation with civil society, the further development and expansion of the documents collection of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), the preparation and widest possible dissemination of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and the provision of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority. The Assembly also requested the Division, as part of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, to continue to organize, under the guidance of the Committee, an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations and encouraged Member States to continue to give the widest support and publicity to the observance of the Day of Solidarity.

4. In its resolution 61/24, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme for the biennium 2006-2007, and outlined a number of specific activities to be carried out under the programme.

5. The Committee has reviewed the various aspects of its own programme of work and that of the Division for Palestinian Rights, as well as of the mandates governing them. It will continue to make adjustments in this programme in the course of 2007 in order to enhance its responsiveness to developments in the peace process and the situation on the ground, as well as to increase its effectiveness in promoting the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

II. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

6. The Committee remains extremely concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which are the direct consequence of the Israeli occupation. The past year had been marred by numerous Israeli military incursions in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank resulting in a large number of deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians. The Committee denounces the use, by Israel, of excessive and indiscriminate force, extrajudicial killings and the destruction of Palestinian homes, civilian infrastructure and agricultural lands, with all the devastating effects on the Palestinian population. The Committee calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to

end its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to cease any other measures that further undermine Palestinian institutions. The Committee is also very concerned at the various incidents of factional violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, and the continued tensions between the main Palestinian parties that hamper the national dialogue. The Committee strongly condemns the killing of innocent civilians by either side. It denounces rocket attacks on Israel and calls for a cessation of those activities by Palestinian armed groups. The Committee welcomes the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which needs to be extended to the West Bank and supported by tangible political steps that would allow the parties to engage in a meaningful political dialogue. The international community should establish a credible and effective third-party monitoring mechanism to help sustain the truce. The Committee calls upon the other United Nations entities concerned to establish, in cooperation with the parties, a general mechanism for the protection of civilians on the ground.

7. The Committee is strongly opposed to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and efforts to complete the construction of the wall on Palestinian land. It is particularly alarmed by the intention of the Israeli Government to expand large settlement blocks in the West Bank, which would separate East Jerusalem from the West Bank and the southern West Bank from its northern part. Declarations by the Israeli Government concerning the establishment of new settlements in the Jordan Valley are another cause for alarm. The settlements and the wall are contrary to international law and to numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. They seriously hamper efforts to resolve the conflict and may render the prospect of a two-State solution physically impossible to implement. The position of the Committee is that the international community must ensure that the occupying Power abides by the provisions of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, as demanded by the Assembly in its resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 and in subsequent Assembly resolutions. It welcomes the adoption by the Assembly of resolution ES-10/17 of 15 December 2006 on the establishment of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and calls upon the Secretary-General to make the requested appointments without further delay, so that the office of the Register of Damage will be operational as early as possible, but not later than 15 June 2007, as stipulated in the resolution. As requested by the Assembly, the Committee will continue to keep the situation under review and to promote a constructive analysis and discussion of these issues by the international community.

8. The Committee expressed concern at the continuation by Israel of illegal settlement activities and the construction of the wall in and around East Jerusalem. These activities further isolate the city from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The construction is having a detrimental effect on the lives of Palestinians and could prejudge a final status agreement on Jerusalem. Moreover, the decision by the Israeli Government, in early February 2007, to authorize excavation and construction work in close proximity to the Al-Aqsa Mosque constitutes yet another measure that threatens to alter the physical character of the city in contravention to many Security Council resolutions. It also raised grave concerns on the part of Muslims around the world and has the potential to escalate violence on the ground. The Committee reiterates that resolving the question of Jerusalem is indispensable

for achieving a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which should take fully into account the legitimate concerns of both sides.

9. The Committee is encouraged by the agreement in Mecca reached in early February 2007 between the Fatah and Hamas leaderships. The agreement is the result of the consistent efforts of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, aimed at forming a government of national unity capable of serving the Palestinian people and fulfilling its responsibilities vis-à-vis the international community. The Committee fully supports these efforts and is looking forward to a new government of national unity that will work to mend differences among the Palestinians and take bold steps towards improving the lives of the Palestinian people. The Committee hopes that the formation of the national unity government would allow the international community to lift financial restrictions and resume much needed economic and social assistance.

10. The Committee is deeply concerned about the worsening economic and social conditions, the humanitarian emergency and the isolation of the Gaza Strip, which provide a fertile ground for the radicalization of parts of the Palestinian population. Israel's withholding of tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority resulted in an unprecedented financial shortfall for the Authority, making it incapable of delivering basic public services to the Palestinian people. The Committee welcomed the release to the Palestinian Authority, in January 2007, of part of the withheld Palestinian taxes, and calls upon Israel to immediately release the remaining withheld taxes and to resume regular payments of the collected money in accordance with the bilateral agreements. The Committee also emphasizes the critical importance of international donor assistance to the functioning of the Palestinian institutions at this time of crisis. It urges the international donor community to continue its assistance programmes and to address, with fresh thinking, the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation.

11. The Committee emphasizes that the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territory, now in its fortieth year, remains the root cause of the conflict. The Committee believes that a negotiated solution that will end the occupation, ensure the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and provide security for the State of Israel is urgently needed. This settlement must conform with international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. The parties should refrain from any unilateral measures that would undermine efforts to achieve a final peace settlement. It is crucial at this stage for the parties to define the final outcome of the peace settlement, namely, ending the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, living in peace and security with Israel and other neighbours. Such an agreement would allow the parties, with the support of the international community, to come to an understanding on parallel mutual steps for its implementation.

12. The international community should focus its efforts on creating practical and meaningful benchmarks to engage all parties in sustaining and widening the mutual ceasefire. Major international peace efforts, such as the Quartet's road map, should be revisited and adjusted. The convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East would create the required positive momentum towards that goal, in particular by incorporating indispensable regional arrangements as well as other

initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative, to establish peace in the region as a whole.

13. The Committee reaffirms the permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. It will work together with the other United Nations entities concerned with the issue to uphold international law, thus setting the standards for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in conformity with international legality. The Committee considers it paramount that the parties to the conflict and all international actors be guided in their initiatives and actions by the principles and norms of international law. It noted with satisfaction a renewed focus on the importance of international law, brought about by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Applying the norms should lead to a complete cessation and reversal of Israeli settlement activities and the construction of the wall on Palestinian land. Adhering to the norms of international humanitarian law shall ensure the cessation of all violent actions, counter-violence and acts of terror targeting innocent civilians on either side.

III. Priority issues in the programme of work of the Committee for 2007

14. The Committee is of the view that its programme of activities, mandated by the General Assembly, contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the general public on issues crucial for advancing a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Throughout 2007, its work will remain focused on promoting a better understanding, as gauged by international public opinion, of the importance of the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, namely the right to self-determination, the right to an independent, sovereign State and the right of return, as well as the urgency of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

15. As in previous years, the Committee will maintain its support of the Palestinian people and the politic.. process through a variety of activities. In 2007, the Committee will pay special attention to assessing the situation on the ground and supporting the creation of conditions conducive to the resumption of peace negotiations, including the complete cessation of all acts of violence, such as military attacks, destruction and acts of terror. The Committee will highlight the responsibility of the occupying Power for ending its illegal policies and practices, such as the settlement activity, the construction of the wall and various measures of collective punishment. The Committee will maintain its support for revitalized and active international involvement aimed at encouraging both parties to overcome the current impasse in the peace process, including through the Quartet and the continued personal engagement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The Committee will, in particular, emphasize the need for protection of the civilian population through third-party monitoring and encourage innovative thinking in that regard by the parties and the international community, including the United Nations. The Committee will also focus on issues relating to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory, stimulating Palestinian economic recovery and urging an increase in international assistance to the Palestinian people. It will lay

special emphasis on raising to a greater extent international awareness of the plight of Palestinian women and children — the most vulnerable segment of the Palestinian society — suffering as a result of the occupation.

16. The Committee attaches great importance to enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights, in the implementation of their respective mandates. In its resolution 61/24, the General Assembly requested the Department, inter alia, to expand its collection of audio-visual material on the question of Palestine and to continue the production and preservation of such material and the updating of the exhibit in the Secretariat. The Committee will continue to cooperate with the Department in carrying out the various mandated activities.

IV. Activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights

A. Action by the Committee

17. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and participate in relevant meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requiring international action.

18. The Committee, through its Bureau, will continue to participate in relevant intergovernmental and other conferences and meetings, as necessary. The Committee considers this activity an important aspect of its work in promotion of international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

19. In cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, the Committee will continue to maintain contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including civil society, in the areas under its jurisdiction and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Following the practice of the previous years, the Committee will continue to invite Palestinian officials and other Palestinian personalities to meetings with members and observers of the Committee and the Secretariat, as required.

20. The Bureau of the Committee will continue consultations with Governments and intergovernmental organizations interested in its programme of work, including members of the European Union and the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and others. These exchanges should help to promote understanding of the Committee mandate and objectives.

B. International meetings and conferences

21. The Committee considers that its programme of international meetings and conferences contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the general public on issues crucial for advancing a peaceful settlement of the conflict. These events highlight the most pressing concerns, such as the need to end violence, protect the civilian population, stop settlement activities and the construction of the wall and improve

the living conditions of the Palestinian population. The Committee highly appreciates the involvement in these meetings of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, entities of the United Nations system and civil society. It encourages them to continue and increase the level of engagement and support for a just solution of the conflict. The Committee will continue to carry out this programme to foster support for the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights in accordance with international legitimacy.

22. In its programme of meetings and conferences for 2007, the Committee intends to address issues such as: the urgency of resuming the political process and reviving the road map and the Arab peace initiative; the negative impact of unilateral political steps by Israel, the occupying Power; the adverse consequences of the settlement policy and the construction of the wall for the achievement of a two-State solution; the responsibility of all Governments to apply international law to all aspects of the question of Palestine; the collective responsibility to protect the civilian population; the need to convene the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, in view of the systematic violation by Israel, the occupying Power, of international humanitarian law; the humanitarian and socio-economic situation, including the plight of Palestinian women and children; the role of civil society; and the importance of supporting the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to rehabilitate the economy, especially that of the Gaza Strip.

23. In 2007, the Committee, in cooperation with prospective host countries, organizations and relevant Secretariat services, will do its utmost to ensure the success of its programme of meetings and conferences. In so doing, it will keep in mind the need for economy and the most cost-effective utilization of resources. The Committee will continue to make an effort to encourage participation by countries and organizations that so far have not engaged fully in its programme of work.

24. The Committee intends to organize the following international meetings and conferences in 2007:

- United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, 5 and 6 February 2007, Doha
- United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, 22 and 23 March 2007, Rome. The meeting will be followed by consultations of the Committee delegation with civil society organizations
- United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, April 2007, Cape Town, South Africa. The meeting will be followed by a civil society event in solidarity with the Palestinian people
- United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian peace

C. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

25. The Committee commends civil society organizations for their efforts to uphold international legitimacy with regard to the question of Palestine through advocacy and mobilizing public opinion, as well as for their humanitarian and assistance initiatives aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and improving their living conditions. The Committee welcomes initiatives aimed at

promoting the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. It encourages civil society organizations to focus and synchronize their advocacy efforts, at the local, national, regional and international levels, on the legal obligations of Governments, as elucidated in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and to coordinate their activities. It supports recent civil society initiatives, including in developing countries, to establish umbrella mechanisms to better coordinate their work. The Committee also backs all humanitarian and assistance initiatives geared towards improving the daily lives of the Palestinians. The Committee considers that it is particularly important to build bridges of understanding and trust between the Israeli and Palestinian civil societies and to promote common goals of peace between the two peoples.

26. The Committee intends to continue to invite civil society organizations to all international meetings and conferences organized under its auspices. At these events, it will encourage them to discuss their own initiatives and campaigns and to exchange views and ideas on issues of mutual interest. The participation of Governments and intergovernmental and civil society organizations in such meetings and conferences should offer a unique opportunity to develop and strengthen initiatives by all strata of the international community, with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, in wishing to promote the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, the Committee looks forward to productive and mutually beneficial engagement by Israeli and Palestinian participants at events organized under its auspices.

27. The Committee will maintain and further develop its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms on the question of Palestine, in addition to the established liaison with a large number of individual civil society organizations. It will continue to accredit new organizations. Periodic meetings of consultations with civil society representatives will contribute to further enhancement of the Committee's programme of cooperation with civil society.

28. The Committee is of the view that it is important to continue to exchange information with civil society on respective current and planned activities. The Committee requests the Division to obtain information and report periodically on civil society initiatives in order to enhance the interaction between civil society and the Committee. It also requests the Division to continue to develop and regularly update its Internet website on the activities of civil society organizations on the question of Palestine (www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo) as a tool for the exchange of information and communication between the United Nations and civil society.

29. In 2007, the resources available for cooperation with civil society will be used for the following activities:

(a) Organization, whenever appropriate and feasible, of meetings of civil society organizations in conjunction with international meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee;

(b) Participation of representatives of the Committee and the Division in important forums and other events worldwide organized by civil society organizations;

(c) Periodic meetings of consultations with various civil society organizations with a view to briefing them on the activities of the Committee and assessing their needs that can be met through the Division's programme of work;

(d) Providing assistance to Palestinian organizations in sending their representatives to meetings held under the auspices of the Committee or supported by the Committee.

Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations

30. The Committee believes that national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations play an important role in shaping public opinion, formulating policy guidelines and upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee is of the view that the experience and political influence of lawmakers and their organizations can be instrumental in consolidating the democratic process and institution-building in the territory under the Palestinian Authority, strengthening political dialogue between the parties and applying the principles of international law to efforts at resolving the conflict. The Committee reaffirms the continuing importance of developing closer cooperation with parliaments and representatives of inter-parliamentary bodies in order to encourage the discussion within the respective parliaments and among all strata of society of ways of supporting peace in the Middle East and resolving the question of Palestine. To that end, the Committee will strive to involve parliamentarians and representatives of inter-parliamentary organizations in international conferences and meetings organized under its auspices. Consultations between the Committee and representatives of parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations, notably the Inter-Parliamentary Union, should improve cooperation between the two sides. The Committee will also make an effort to involve members of the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council in events organized under its auspices.

D. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

31. The Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue its work on the further development, expansion and administration of UNISPAL, which is featured on the "Question of Palestine" website. The Division will make an effort to launch the site's portal, designed under the guidance of the Bureau, and will continue to redesign the various web pages of the site. The Division will continue to ensure that the UNISPAL collection of United Nations and related documents is comprehensive and up to date and that its access modalities and displays are user-friendly. The Committee requests the Division to report periodically to the Bureau on the status of work accomplished on the system and progress achieved in its development.

E. Publications programme

32. The Committee considers that the Division's publications programme contributes to the heightening of international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine, the involvement of the United Nations and the work of the Committee, its mandate and objectives. The Division should continue this important information and outreach activity, under the guidance of the Committee, and issue the following programmed publications in a timely manner:

- Monthly bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine
- Periodic review of developments relating to the Middle East peace process

- Monthly chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine
- Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine
- Reports of international meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee
- Annual bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
- "NGO Action News", a bimonthly summary of information on civil society activities on the question of Palestine

33. The Committee believes that the Division, in consultation with the Bureau, should continue to review the existing publications and make proposals with regard to those that require updating.

F. Other activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights

Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

34. The Committee considers that, in the light of its importance and usefulness to the Palestinian Authority, the Division should continue the training programme in 2007. The Committee is of the view that, in selecting candidates for this annual programme, special consideration should be given to achieving gender balance.

Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

35. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Thursday, 29 November 2007. It is envisaged that special meetings in observance of the day will take place at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and elsewhere, in accordance with established practice. For 29 November 2007, a Palestinian exhibit or a cultural event will be organized at United Nations Headquarters in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

36. The Committee will continue to review and assess its programme of work in the light of the situation on the ground and new developments in the political process, and will make adjustments as necessary.